

## 138 Republican Character of Swiss Reformation.

and a considerable part of eastern Switzerland was won to the new creed.

The Swiss Reformation as directed from Zurich was, however, the work of the Government rather than the people, except in those districts where a democratic constitution gave scope to the popular will. The Swiss Confederation could not be called a democracy, though it owed its existence to popular uprisings against the Habsburg or other feudal magnates. It was a "Staatenbund," not a "Bundesstaat"—a number of small states or cantons, with a Diet which represented the cantons, not the people, and decided all questions by a vote of the majority of these cantons, not a majority of popular representatives. Nevertheless, within each canton, which was independent in its internal affairs, the Government was republican in form, and in some of them it was essentially democratic. In the Grisons, for example, as the old proverb has it, "the poorest inhabitant, next to God and the sun, is the chief magistrate." The government, whether aristocratic or democratic, heard the disputants, *pro* and *contra*, and decided after such public disputation to decree or forbid the reformed creed and worship. In the republic, as in the monarchy, religion was as yet an affair of State, and not a matter of individual conviction. Hence the prominence of the lay element in the government of the Church, as established at republican Zurich. The synod of the canton was composed, not merely of the ministers but of two lay representatives of every parish, and of four members of each of the Greater and Lesser Councils. The ecclesiastical element was subordinate to the congregational; the laity, official and non-official, had a predominant voice in ecclesiastical government and discipline, and in this respect the republican differs widely from the Lutheran and Romanist Church polity.

It is not surprising that these men of the Alps should have thrown off the yoke of the old Church. They had given proof of the resolute spirit of resistance to authority in many a bloody encounter with their hereditary foe of the house of Habsburg. The spirit of independence lived in those wild fortresses of Nature, and needed only the occasion to display itself. In the preceding century it had put an effective check to the aggressive designs of Louis XL and Charles of Bur-